



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

January 22, 2019

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan
Seattle City Hall
600 Fourth Avenue, 7th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

*Re: Search and Confirmation Process for the Director of the Human Services
Department Nominee*

Dear Mayor Durkan:

As policymakers, we know that tackling the ongoing homelessness crisis collaboratively, urgently and with evidence-based strategies and interventions is our most pressing responsibility. Like you, we hear daily from constituents calling upon us to support a regional approach, to increase funding of mental and behavioral health systems and to increase the availability of deeply affordable housing. Even during the formation of a regional governance entity, the City of Seattle continues to play a meaningful role in alleviating the suffering of our neighbors experiencing homelessness. The next permanent Director of the Human Services Department (HSD) is no exception. The HSD Director will continue to play a critical role in implementing and operationalizing the City of Seattle's homelessness prevention and emergency response strategies that are essential to the survival of thousands of people experiencing housing instability.

We understand that the City Council confirmation process of your nominee, Interim HSD Director Jason Johnson, should soon be underway in the Human Services, Equitable Development and Renter's Rights Committee chaired by Councilmember Kshama Sawant. While we recognize that this process, and recommended candidate for the position, is a function of the Executive, concerns regarding transparency and inclusion during the search and selection process have been recently raised with us.

On January 16, 2019, members of the Seattle Human Services Coalition sent City Council a letter noting a search and selection process that lacked the input or inclusion of community members, service providers, or recipients of HSD services. Additionally, there were concerns expressed about a lack of representation of HSD employees or their bargaining unit members in the search process.

If true, the absence of outreach to and/or inclusion of internal and external stakeholders in a search process to identify a leader of a department that provides critical supportive services to



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our communities most vulnerable members, is inconsistent with other recent Director level searches. For example, the recent search for the newly appointed Director of Seattle City Light included a [22-member](#) search committee. The search committee for a new Seattle Chief of Police included input from a [25-member](#) search committee, and a city wide community [outreach calendar](#).

We recognize that each search process is unique and has its own character, timing and needs. However, the importance of this role does lend itself to a similar type of transparency and inclusivity in the selection process. Understanding what the selection process for this candidate has included, who was consulted, and what qualities and characteristics the candidate possesses making them uniquely qualified for this position, is a matter of concern to all who call themselves partners in the fight against homelessness.

We would appreciate any additional information your office can provide in answering these questions and/or providing us with additional information in advance of a Full Council vote on the nomination of Interim HSD Director Johnson.

Should your staff have any questions, they may contact our offices or Legislative Aides, Sejal Parikh (sejal.parikh@seattle.gov) or Brianna Thomas (Brianna.Thomas@seattle.gov).

We look forward to speaking to you soon about how we can continue to partner on this shared priority.

Very truly yours,

Councilmember M. Lorena González
Position 9, Citywide
Chair: GESCNA-Ed
Vice Chair: Finance & Neighborhoods Committee

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
Position 8, Citywide
Chair: HHEWR
Vice Chair: GESCNA-Ed

cc: Deputy Mayor Shefali Ranganathan
Anthony Auriemma, Mayor's Office
Brianna Thomas, Office of Councilmember González
Sejal Parikh, Office of Councilmember Mosqueda